

XVII.—*Letters, Extracts, and Notes.*

WE have received the following letters addressed "To the Editors of 'The Ibis'":—

SIRS,—I thank you for your kind inquiries in regard to our new Californian Museum. The following information in regard to it you are welcome to use as you please.

About two years ago Miss Annie M. Alexander, of Oakland, agreed to give \$7,000 yearly for seven years to equip and maintain a "Museum of Vertebrate Zoology," on condition that the Regents of the University should provide a suitable building. The plans for the building as finally determined upon, with its equipment, called for about \$14,000.

The building, now completed, stands north of California Field and adjoins on the east the new Fertilizer Control Laboratory. Externally it is a rectangular structure one hundred and five feet long by fifty feet wide, covered with corrugated galvanized iron. Within, the southern portion of the ground floor has been built as an exhibition hall, fifty feet by seventy-five feet, open to a skylight in the roof above, with a gallery on all sides twelve feet in width at the second floor level. In this hall will be mounted a number of groups of large Californian mammals, arranged in semblance to their natural surroundings, with backgrounds painted by Carlos Hittell, the San Francisco artist. The groups are now being made by Mr. John Rowley, formerly taxidermist of the American Museum of Natural History in New York, employed here for this purpose by the managers of the Alexander fund. The groups when completed will stand behind plate glass under the light, so that visitors will see them from beneath the gallery. In this way the best possible advantage will be taken of the lighting effects, as there will be no reflection from the glass of the cases.

In the gallery, on the second floor, are to be arranged the storage-cases of research-collections, and perhaps later on a

few small groups for exhibition. The storage-cases are airtight zinc-lined cabinets of sliding trays in which dry specimens can be kept safe from moisture and from insect pests, and can be fumigated when necessary. These rows of cases, known as "zincs," are a characteristic feature of the new museum's equipment, there being already thirty-seven of them in use.

The research-room faces the north and east. Wide tables are built along the north end of the room under the windows, to hold trays taken from the storage-cases for purposes of study. On the other side of the building, facing north and west, is the library and study, which is also the office of the Director and of the Curators. The book-shelves in this room contain a number of necessary reference books and the bound files of collectors' field-notes. There is also a map-rack for records of research in distribution of species and its causes.

The collections in the museum contain notably a large series of bears, including skins, skulls, and complete skeletons, chiefly from Alaska, gathered from various sources by Miss Alexander and donated to the museum. There is also a complete representation of the two Californian species of sea-lions, about twelve specimens of each, and an example of the Alaskan moose, which, as regards size, is among the record specimens of a species normally much larger than that found in Maine and the British provinces.

Of birds over twelve thousand specimens belonging to the museum have already been catalogued. Of small mammals over nine thousand have been catalogued. There are about two thousand reptiles and batrachians catalogued. In addition to the specimens which are the property of the museum, there are several private collections on deposit, notably the Grinnell collection of eight thousand birds, and the Swarth and Morcom bird-collections, of about four thousand specimens each. The University's collections are chiefly the result of Miss Alexander's expeditions; only about 1300 specimens belonged to the University previously.

The activities of the Museum staff have been largely devoted to the direction of collecting expeditions. In 1907 and 1908 Miss Alexander personally conducted expeditions to Alaska. The results of the expedition of 1907 have recently been published in the series of University of California Publications in Zoology. During the summers of 1908 and 1909 five collectors were at work in different fields under the direction of Mr. Grinnell.

The museum aims at becoming the centre for the systematic study of the birds, mammals, and reptiles of the Pacific Coast. The Collections of the Biological Survey in Washington are vastly larger, even with regard to Pacific Coast forms, but of course are not available for study in this part of the country.

The staff of the museum consists of Mr. Joseph Grinnell, formerly of the Throop Polytechnic Institute of Pasadena, Director; Mr. Harry S. Swarth, curator of birds; and Mr. W. P. Taylor, assistant curator of mammals. Mr. Edmund Heller, appointed curator of mammals, is at present on an indefinite leave of absence, with the Smithsonian Institution's expedition to Africa under Colonel Roosevelt.

I am, Sirs, yours &c.,

JOSEPH GRINNELL.

Berkeley, California,
December 17th, 1909.

SIRS,—I wish to congratulate you on Dr. Sclater's article ('Ibis,' 1909, p. 347) on the practice of attaching "authorities" to the scientific names of animals. This practice has for many years seemed to me an absurd contradiction to the principle of Binomial Nomenclature. If it be once admitted as necessary there can be no reason for changing a specific name when it has been already used for another species of the same genus. If it be once granted that a species should be called "*rufus* Smith" and not simply "*rufus*," there can be no reason for changing a specific name when it has already been used for another species of the same genus. The different "authority" would be sufficient to distinguish them.

All the efforts to eliminate double names in the same genus have no reason unless your contention be accepted.

I only regret that you have not given your protest to zoologists at large instead of confiding it to the readers of an ornithological periodical.

I am, Sirs, yours &c.,

Concilium Bibliographicum,
Zurich, 23.i.10.

N. H. FIELD.

The B.O.U. Expedition for the Exploration of Central New Guinea.—In our last number (above, p. 223) we expressed a hope that the B.O.U. Expedition under the leadership of Mr. Walter Goodfellow would be able to land on the south coast of New Guinea and commence work early in January last. We are now able to state that the party left Dobbo on January the 3rd, in the Dutch steamer 'Nias,' and reached the mouth of the Mimika River two days later. A base-camp was established on the 5th near a village called Wakatimi, about 12 miles up the river, and the stores were disembarked. The natives were very numerous but quite friendly. On January the 9th Mr. Stalker, who had gone into the bush unattended, was reported as missing. We very much regret to say that further intelligence has arrived that after several days of anxious search his dead body was found in the river, but no details have been received as to how it got there.

The news was received by telegram from Batavia on February 1, and had probably been forwarded by steamer from the Aru Islands. With this telegram Mr. Ogilvie-Grant received a long letter from Mr. Stalker, written from "Amboina, December 24, 1909." In this he stated that he had been successful in engaging the services of 150 carriers, and was expecting the arrival of Mr. Walter Goodfellow, the leader of the expedition, in a few days. He also mentioned the dispatch of various cases containing collections of mammals and birds, &c., which have been procured in Central Ceram, and are likely to prove of great interest.

Mr. Stalker left England about a year ago, and proceeded to the Aru Islands to obtain living examples of Birds-of-Paradise for Sir William Ingram. It had been arranged that, after completing this engagement, he should join the other members of the British Ornithologists' Union Expedition, filling up his time until their arrival by collecting natural-history specimens and by making the preliminary arrangements for transport in New Guinea. His letter, mentioned above, states how usefully he had employed his time in carrying out his instructions. Mr. Stalker had already had considerable experience of life in New Guinea, having spent several years (between 1904-6) at the gold mines on the Mambare River, in the northern part of the British territory. It was then that he first began to collect specimens for the Natural History Museum. Subsequently, at the suggestion of Mr. Oldfield Thomas, who had discovered his great ability in trapping and preparing mammals, he was sent by Sir William Ingram and Mr. Forest to Alexandra, in the northern territory of South Australia, and in 1907 to Inkerman, in East Queensland. In both these places he did admirable work, and formed fine collections of mammals, which were presented by his patrons to the Natural History Museum. In 1909, in company with Mr. C. R. Horsburgh, he again visited British New Guinea and the Aru Islands on behalf of Sir William Ingram, and was successful in bringing back a large number of living Birds-of-Paradise, including a male of the beautiful Blue Bird-of-Paradise (*Paradisornis rudolphi*), which had not previously been brought to Europe alive. Early in 1909, after a short stay in England, he again started on the present undertaking, when he so unfortunately lost his life. Mr. Stalker was quite a young man—only thirty-one years of age—having been born on January 17, 1879, and it is sad to think that the successful career of this talented naturalist should have been terminated so early and in so tragic a manner.

Lorentz's New Guinea Expedition.—We learn from 'Nature' of February 17 (vol. 82, p. 464) that a telegram has been

received from Mr. H. A. Lorentz, stating that his expedition into Central New Guinea from the South Coast has been successful. Mr. Lorentz's party reached the snow-capped range which had previously only been dimly perceived from a distance. He has climbed up to these Alpine regions, and has discovered glaciers at an altitude of 15,000 feet. We shall, no doubt, soon receive further particulars. Mr. Lorentz's route was, we believe, up the North River, as on his former Expeditions.

New Ornithological Expedition to Mongolia.—Mr. Douglas Carruthers has organized a new expedition in which, in conjunction with his friends Mr. J. H. Miller and Mr. M. P. Price, he will traverse North-Western Mongolia, and make a collection of its birds and other natural objects. The programme is to take the Siberian Railway as far as Krasnoyarsk, and thence go by steamer up the Yenesei to the Russian settlement of Minusinsk. At this place the expedition will be fitted out, and proceed southwards over the frontier into Chinese territory. The early spring and summer will be devoted to working the upper sources of the Yenesei River for zoological and botanical purposes. This region is chiefly mountainous and heavily forested.

From Kobdo, which is situated to the south-west of the basin of the Upper Yenesei, a zigzag journey will be made through Dzungaria to Kuldja in the neighbourhood of the Tian-shan Mountains. This route will lead over many successive self-contained basins, with alternate desert and mountain-ranges. After this, plans will be dependent upon time and circumstances, but Mr. Carruthers hopes to turn south-eastwards, and, after wintering in the Tarim basin, to push on in the spring into the Chinese provinces of Kansu and Alashan. Mr. Miller and Mr. Carruthers will divide the labours of collecting animals, while Mr. Price will undertake the botany and forestry. The expedition, which has just started, will probably be away about a year or fifteen months.

A new Gigantic Fossil Bird.—We learn from the last number of 'The Condor,' vol. xii. p. 52, that a new gigantic fossil bird has been discovered in the asphalt-beds near Los Angeles, and described by Mr. Love Holmes Miller. The species is new, as well as the genus, and has been named *Teratornis merriami*, in honour of Professor John C. Merriam of the University of California, through whose efforts the fossil-beds of Rancho la Brea have been brought to the attention of palæontologists.

The description is based on coracoids, sternum, and a nearly complete skull. The fragments so far secured represent at least four individuals. The bird is probably related to the American Vultures (Cathartidæ), and was of enormous size, much greater than that of any existing flying bird. Since the limb-bones and feet are still unknown, final conclusions as to its relationship must be postponed; but it appears probable that a new family will have to be established for it.

In the same beds are found remains of some extinct Mammals (*Smilodon* and *Paramylodon*) of Pleistocene Age.

The Bangs Collection of American Birds.—As we learn from the 'Museums Journal' (vol. ix. p. 328), the private collection of birds belonging to Messrs. E. A. and O. Bangs, containing approximately 24,000 skins, has been acquired by the Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard College. The specimens are mostly from North and Central America and the northern part of South America, and comprise the types of the many new species and subspecies recently described by Mr. O. Bangs, whose numerous memoirs have been frequently noticed in this Journal of late years. We congratulate the authorities of the Museum of Comparative Zoology on having obtained such a valuable addition to their Bird-collection.

The Rhodesia Museum, Buluwayo.—We are much pleased to hear that the Directors of the British South Africa Company have granted a piece of land at Buluwayo for the site

of a new museum, and that the Beit Trustees have given £2,500 towards the erection of the buildings. There is, we believe, a good local collection of birds already in existence, and we are sure that Mr. E. C. Chubb, the Assistant-Curator, will lose no opportunity of adding to it. He has already sent us an article on the birds of the surrounding district (see 'Ibis,' 1909, p. 140), and will, no doubt, favour us with further communications, when convenient.

A Present to the B. O. U.—At the Ninth Annual Session of the Australasian Ornithologists' Union, held at Adelaide on September 30th, 1909, it was proposed by Mr. A. J. Campbell, seconded by Mr. Charles Barrett, and resolved, that copies of the cinematograph-films depicting the bird-life of the expedition of the A. O. U. to the islands of Bass' Straits in 1908 be sent to England as a present to the British Ornithologists' Union. It is hoped that they may arrive in time to be exhibited at the joint meeting of the B. O. U. and B. O. C. on May 25th.

The Destruction of Birds in the Riviera.—In the last number of the 'Avicultural Magazine' (ser. 3, vol. i. p. 125), Lt.-Col. Momber writes as follows on the treatment of birds in the Riviera:—

"The excessively ornithophagous proclivities of the Southerners are a heavy set-back to the advantages lavished by nature on the Riviera. Every one shoots, nothing is spared, and the corpses of the daintiest songsters—Goldfinches, Siskins, Robins, Warblers—hang in bunches in the town markets.

"In Italy, the protective laws are still embryonic and seldom enforced; offenders are leniently dealt with, and illegal practices prevail. In general, wholesale methods of bird-catching are prohibited in Liguria; it is mainly in the provinces of Como and Piedmont that the gardens of death flourish, the terrible roccolo and passata. But the popular amusement of besetting with bird-limed grapes the streams in dry weather is indulged in despite the law, and is singularly

destructive and wasteful, for all the birds of the district get limed and many are not even bagged, but flutter away to die a lingering death.

“If proof were needed of the deep-rooted passion for bird-hunting of the Italians, it could be found in the fact that in U.S.A. the Audubon Societies find it necessary to disseminate leaflets among the Italian immigrants, printed in their tongue, exhorting them to respect the laws and customs of their new country, and to refrain from destroying that which is beautiful as well as profitable.

“These habits are less surprising in a newly united kingdom such as Italy, still tinged with mediævalism and the traditions of many formerly separate small States, than in France. For France signed the International Convention of 1902, and thus is accredited with the perspicacity and æsthetic development which are inseparable from an intelligent and humane protection of natural objects. But, after giving itself the sound and sufficient laws of the Convention, as now in force in Germany, Switzerland, Austria, and Hungary, and after appointing a day for these enactments to take effect, the French Chamber, by a large majority in November 1906, passed an ‘indulgence decree’ suspending *sine die* the application of the laws, and upholding the old order of things. This means an annual issue by Prefects of Departments of regulations relating to game and birds, and the old systematic war of extermination carried on indefinitely. It is a poignantly ridiculous condition of affairs, until one remembers the political corruption and favouritism that lie at its root, and the steady diminution of bird-life it causes. Then it becomes deplorable.”

Hungarian ringed Storks in South Africa. (Marked in Hungary by means of numbered aluminium rings.)

1. Marked on July 10, 1908, ring no. 209, at *Hidvég*, 45° 50' N. Lt., 43° 15' E. Lg. Killed on January 30, 1909, at *Seaforth*, Himeville, District Polela, Natal, about 30° 0' S. Lt., 48° 0' E. Lg. Distance about 8600 kms. Reported by Mr. PETER MACKENZIE in ‘Times’ issue of March 3, 1909.

2. Marked on June 26, 1909, ring no. 1415, at *Bogyán*, 45° 25' N. Lt., 36° 45' E. Lg. Killed on November 22, 1909, at *Lake Banagher*, Ermelo district, Transvaal, about 26° 30' S. Lt., 48° 0' E. Lg. Distance about 8100 kms. Reported by Mr. E. PEARCE in East London Daily Dispatch, December 1, 1909, and Mr. H. MEYER in De Volkstem of December 6, 1909.

3. Marked on June 26, 1909, ring no. 1432, also at *Bogyán*. Killed on November 28, 1909, at *Glencoe Junction*, Natal, about 28° 20' S. Lt., 48° 0' E. Lg. Distance about 8300 kms. Reported by Mr. GEORGE E. MATTHEWS.

4. Marked on July 5, 1909, ring no. 2054, at *Rakamaz*, 48° 10' N. Lt., 39° 10' E. Lg. Killed on December 14, 1909, at *Lehloenyas*, Morija, Basutoland, about 29° 40' S. Lt., 45° 30' E. Lg. Distance about 8750 kms. Reported by Mr. MILES CAPSTICK, Jr.

5. Marked on July 13, 1909, ring no. 2298, at *Réty*, 45° 50' N. Lt., 43° 40' E. Lg. Killed on December 1909 at *Senekal*, Orange River Colony, about 28° 20' S. Lt., 27° 30' E. Lg. Distance about 8500 kms. Reported by Mr. P. STAHL.

Issued at the Royal Hungarian Central Bureau for Ornithology, Budapest, Hungary, on January 20, 1910.

The Pre-Nuptial Plumage of the Sanderling.—At the meeting of the British Association at Winnipeg last year, Dr. C. J. Patten read a paper on the pre-nuptial plumage of the Sanderling (*Calidris arenaria*), of which the following is an abstract:—

It may be well to state very briefly what led up to this investigation. Repeated observations on the Sanderling during its vernal migration shew that the species occurs in varying numbers throughout the breeding-season on different parts of the British coast. A certain proportion of the migrants, pushing northward, appear to sojourn with us during the summer. These birds, while assuming what might easily be mistaken for the nuptial plumage, shew no evidence that they remain to breed, for the flocks keep to

the coasts and do not split up into pairs. Based upon the above data I have elsewhere put forward the hypothesis that the birds were immature (*vide* 'Naturalist,' 1909, pp. 84, 85). Here I hope further to strengthen this hypothesis by direct objective evidence obtained from an examination of the plumage-markings. The rich variegated markings of chestnut, brown, and black, which appear on the head, neck, breast, back, and wings, are found in the summer plumage in Sanderlings in all ages, after the first winter plumage. It is generally known as the nuptial plumage. When, however, the tertials of those birds which tarry with us till late June, July, and the beginning of August are examined, it may be noticed that they, *like the tertials of the first winter plumage, are relatively short*, the longest not reaching to the tip of the fourth primary feather, the wing being folded in the natural position. By far the majority of Sanderlings which I have collected in late spring and summer have short tertials, and to such plumage I give the name of *pre-nuptial*, from its close resemblance to the true nuptial plumage which it precedes. But a few specimens collected towards the end of April and in early May, from small flocks, shewed on examination to have *longer tertials which reached halfway between the tip of the fourth and third primary, and in some cases almost to the tip of the third primary*. Such birds, I believe, have assumed the adult nuptial plumage of the second or subsequent springs. This plumage follows the plumage of the second or subsequent winters, in which the long ashy-grey tertials are easily distinguishable from the darker shorter ones of the first winter plumage.

The Annual General Meeting of the B. O. U.—We are requested by the Secretary to state that the Annual General Meeting, for 1910, of the British Ornithologists' Union will be held at the Zoological Society's Offices, 3 Hanover Square (by permission), on Wednesday, May 25th, at 5.30 P.M. The usual dinner after the meeting will take place, in conjunction with the monthly meeting of the British Ornithologists' Club, at Pagani's Restaurant, 42 Great Portland Street, at 7 P.M.